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Denver Business Journal

**Wednesday, November
7, 2007**

**Denver sweeps board with
ballot measures**

The Denver Business Journal - by Mark Harden

Denver Business Journal

All pieces of a half-billion-dollar package of civic-improvement measures on Denver's election ballot were headed for passage early Wednesday, but a flood of last-minute ballots and computer problems were delaying final results.

In partial returns Wednesday morning, all nine of Denver's lettered measures -- 1A through 1I -- funding a host of projects and expanded services were leading, most by wide margins.

The measures included 1G and 1H, which together provide \$130 million for construction, maintenance and improvement projects at city cultural institutions, such as the Denver Museum of Nature & Science and Boettcher Concert Hall, home of the Colorado Symphony. As of 5:21 a.m. Wednesday, 1H was narrowly leading by about three percentage points.

Other key measures headed for passage in partial returns were 1E, authorizing \$93 million in bonds for park facilities, and 1I, approving \$65 million in bonds for improvements to public safety operations.

In the Denver Public Schools board elections, two incumbents who back Superintendent Michael Bennet's reform proposals -- Theresa Pena and Bruce Hoyt -- were winning handily. In a third race,

District 5, Arturo Jimenez was narrowly leading.

Also winning on Tuesday's Denver ballot was Initiated Question 100, a measure calling for a low priority for enforcement of marijuana laws.

Click here for the latest Denver results:

www.denvergov.org/elections

<<http://www.denvergov.org/elections>> .

City election officials said about a third of all ballots cast were turned in by voters on Tuesday, election day. Officials said the turnout was unexpectedly large, at about 90,000 returned ballots out of 209,000 distributed. Voting was by mail-in ballot. As of 5:21 a.m. Wednesday, about 80,000 ballots had been tabulated.

Late Tuesday, police officers were called in to help as the ballots were being counted.

A server problem overnight delayed release of results as ballots were counted. A message error appeared on the city elections Web site for much of the night.

In January's election, in the wake of the problem-plagued 2006 elections in which many voters waited for hours in line, Denver citizens dumped the city's election commission and replaced it with a clerk-recorder office to handle elections.

Elsewhere in the metro area, a measure on Aurora's

ballot to authorize the sale of \$200 million in bonds to provide masonry fencing around neighborhoods was winning handily in early returns.

A measure in Centennial to approve home rule in the newly created city was leading narrowly.

Denver Post

Wednesday, November 7, 2007

Student clinics a shot in the arm

Denver Health's sites in DPS schools are touted nationally for their ability to reduce emergency-room visits and boost immunization rates.

Article Last Updated: 11/07/2007 03:17:37 AM MST

The idea was to bring a full-service doctor's office to southwest Denver's Kunsmiller Middle School's teenagers - most of whom had no health insurance.

Today, barely a year after Denver Health Medical

Center opened a clinic next to the front office, 10 kids drop in every day, with everything from aches and pains to appendicitis and anxiety.

Kunsmiller's health center is one of 12 clinics in Denver Public Schools run by Denver Health that offer free care - from the physicals for sports teams and flu shots to mental health and asthma treatment.

The \$3.6-million system - financed through a patchwork of grants and public funds - has been effective in providing primary care to needy students, according to a study last month in the journal Pediatrics.

The study compared teens cared for in Denver's school-based clinics with those treated in Denver Health's community clinics around the city.

Students who could walk down the hall during school hours and see a doctor, a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner were half as likely as their peers to end up in an emergency room and much more likely to get their recommended immunizations.

"Nationally, we promote Denver as a model," said John Schlitt, executive director of the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care in Washington, D.C.

Last week, a task force charting the future of the clinics recommended that the six centers in high

schools provide birth control and emergency contraception - if supported by the school community.

Last year, though, reproductive health services and pregnancy made up just 12 percent of the 32,799 visits to the Denver Health school clinics, said the clinics' director, Steve Federico.

About 1,950 visits, or 6 percent, were related to pregnancy, Denver Health data show. Another 6 percent involved reproductive health issues from diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases to talks about sexual health.

Students with acute illness, injury, asthma, or seeking annual immunizations and sports physicals are a much greater part of the clinics' work, data show.

From sniffles to suicide

"A physical can cost \$120 from a private provider," said Kunsmiller's clinic coordinator, nurse practitioner LuAnne Hicks. "Our students cannot afford that. Here, it's free."

Half of the students seeking care in the school-based clinics have no health insurance, according to Denver Health data.

Getting kids into the center for annual immunizations, Hicks said, also gives her and other

health care experts a chance to ask teens about their eating habits and home lives.

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"We find a lot of kids coming in with trauma histories," Hicks said.

The psychiatrist who spends one day a week at the 520-student Kunsmiller is maxed out, she said.

"His caseload is full," she said. "Kids know we're here now, and they realize they can get help. We have kids who have been suicidal - and homicidal."

Hicks said she recently sent a student to the hospital after seeing signs of appendicitis.

Surgeons removed the boy's appendix the same day.

"The difference between catching appendicitis pre-rupture and post- is huge," Federico said.

"It's going to the hospital for surgery, spending one night there and going home," he said, versus "spending five to seven days in the hospital with an open wound and on antibiotics."

The goal, Federico said, is to keep kids out of the hospital. It appears to be working, according to the Pediatrics study.

Teens with asthma who were treated at Denver school health centers were three times more likely to get a flu shot - recommended for asthmatics - than their peers in community clinics, the researchers found.

Overall, school-based patients were more likely to receive preventive care, including screening for sexually transmitted diseases.

Denver's clinics - which rely on donations of staff time from area health institutions - struggle for funding, said Paul Melinkovich, former director of the school-based clinics.

"We closed clinics at East and Martin Luther King in 2003, when Denver Health had some cutbacks in funding," Melinkovich said.

East High School's clinic never re-opened, he said; the school has drawn more insured students and the need diminished.

The Martin Luther King Middle School clinic re-opened this fall.

Stopping illness in its tracks

One of Denver Health's oldest clinics is at Lincoln High in southwest Denver, where physician assistant Lisa Kelly coordinates care.

"We see a lot of asthma, physicals when sports are getting going. And we do a lot of confidentials," Kelly said, referring to health care visits involving sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy testing and discussions about birth control and sexual behavior.

School clinic staff neither prescribe nor distribute birth control pills or emergency contraception, Kelly said. Students are referred to other clinics.

Kelly said being school-based gives her the chance to follow up with students, catching them in the hallways or pulling them out of classes.

For example, forty-eight hours after a student's chlamydia test came back positive this year, the student was on antibiotics, and a partner was identified, tested and also started on a prescription, Kelly said.

"We catch these things early - and by treating them early, we prevent later complications," Kelly said.

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Incumbents keep seats in DPS board contests

Results seen as approval of ambitious reforms sought by district leaders

Article Last Updated: 11/07/2007 01:48:59 AM MST

Two incumbents appeared to retain their Denver school board seats, and the race for the northwest Denver seat was too close to call late Tuesday night with only a 36-vote difference as votes continued to be tabulated.

School board President Theresa Peña was on her way to retaining her at-large seat, leading challengers John McBride and Rita Montero with 45.5 percent of the vote.

Incumbent Bruce Hoyt also led in the District 1 race that represents southeast Denver, ahead of challengers Larry Botnick and Frank Deserino with 65.4 percent of the vote.

The tight race in northwest Denver's District 5 featured attorney Arturo Jimenez narrowly ahead of environmental engineer Tony Curcio by 36 votes - or 33.7 percent to 33.2 percent of the votes.

Grocery store clerk Raymond J. Gutierrez had 22.2 percent of the votes in the District 5 race.

This year's election for the three seats on Denver's seven-member board had been portrayed by some as a referendum on Denver Public Schools' recent reforms, with incumbents pleading with voters to stay the course and many challengers seeking a new direction.

If that was the case, voters on Tuesday gave Superintendent Michael Bennet a vote of confidence.

"I'm extremely pleased," Bennet said. "I couldn't be happier that Bruce and Theresa were re-elected. They have provided tremendous leadership to a school board that is united in its desire to see reform in Denver Public Schools. I think these results are going to allow us to continue to move forward."

Peña said she saw the vote as a nod that the board and the district were on the right track.

"It's an affirmation of the work that the district and the board has been doing for the past four years," Peña said.

"The vote demonstrates that there is still an important message to get to our community so they can understand what we are doing."

In District 5, a seat being vacated by Lucia Guzman because of term limits, the vote may come down to a recount - which automatically occurs if the difference is within a 1 percent margin.

"We like the trend but it's not over yet," Jimenez said late Tuesday at his election party as the vote count increased in his favor. "We were just a little surprised earlier, but still optimistic. We knew the tail-end results were going to be good for us."

Curcio had raised only \$8,600 in campaign

contributions - including a \$4,000 loan to himself - compared with Jimenez's \$20,600.

"It's a wait and see," Curcio said Tuesday evening. "I've worked hard. I've talked to a lot of people and we've kept it about the issues."

The election saw the Denver teachers union and city auditor Dennis Gallagher support challengers over the incumbents.

Though none of the challengers would outright criticize Bennet or the current reforms, they did support looking at other methods - many calling for more money to flow to the classrooms.

Few of the candidates opposed the district's most noteworthy reform effort on the table now - a proposal to close eight elementary schools and redesign five others in an effort to reduce the district's under-used space and improve student achievement.

The current board votes on the closure plan at the Nov. 19 board meeting, just before swearing in the board's newest member from northwest Denver and reappointing Peña and Hoyt.

Moreover, Bennet's far-reaching blueprint for reform turned out not to be campaign fodder during the election.

The Denver Plan, put in place last fall, sets forth

myriad reforms, including doubling up on reading and math classes for sixth- through ninth-graders who are behind, establishing new grading policies and imposing new graduation requirements.

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DENVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Director-at-large

Rita Montero 17.4%

* Theresa Peña 45.5%

John McBride 37.1%

Director District 1

Frank E. Deserino 11.8%

* Bruce L. Hoyt 65.4%

Laurence E. Botnick 22.7%

Director District 5

Jose G. Silva 10.8%

Raymond J. Gutierrez 22.2%

Tony Curcio 33.2%

Arturo Jimenez 33.7%

Rocky Mountain News

Wednesday, November
7, 2007

2 DPS board reformers getting voters' OK

By Nancy Mitchell, Rocky Mountain News
November 7, 2007

One incumbent Denver Public Schools board member was re-elected, another appeared to be keeping her seat, and the third race - to represent northwest Denver - was too nail-bitingly close to call.

DPS Board President Theresa Peña and Vice President Bruce Hoyt celebrated their leads in a South Broadway restaurant packed with supporters, including Superintendent Michael Bennet.

"I'm thrilled," Peña said after 9 p.m., as she led her closest opponent, John McBride, by more than 4,000 votes. "This one feels even better than the last one because we know how much is at stake."

In a restaurant at 33rd Avenue and Tejon Street, candidate Arturo Jimenez hugged his wife and friends whooped as he climbed to a slim lead.

Jimenez and candidate Tony Curcio, at home with family and friends, were separated by fewer than 100 votes for much of the evening, with Curcio leading.

"It's not over; it's not over yet," Jimenez's campaign consultant, Manolo Gonzalez-Estay, cautioned the small cluster of supporters still hanging around four hours after the Election Night party began. They kept smiling anyway.

Curcio and Jimenez were neck- and-neck near midnight.

Hoyt, who won by a ratio of more than 2-to-1, and Peña both saw their race results as evidence that voters are supportive of the ongoing reform efforts in DPS.

"We have a real opportunity to make a significant difference in DPS for a long, long time to come," Hoyt said.

Tony Lewis, head of the Donnell-Kay Foundation, which focuses on school district leadership issues, agreed.

"I look at a positive vote for Theresa and Bruce as confidence in them as individuals and as a board moving reform forward in this district," he said.

Lewis also said he was not surprised that a school closure package currently before the board did not seem to have much impact on the elections.

"I think the voters in Denver understand the need to close failing and under-enrolled schools," he said. "And I think they're supportive of a board that does it in a thoughtful way, as this one has."

Hoyt also conceded, as did Peña, that, "We've got a lot of work to do."

He ticked off key issues: solving the district's budget crunch so the district reform strategy, the Denver Plan, can be fully implemented; and "crystallizing" an accountability process that gives every school measurable goals to attain.

Peña cited a need to better communicate the district's plans and a need to begin working on transforming the rest of Denver's 150 schools - not just the 13 touched by the current school closure package.

Meanwhile, Kim Ursetta, president of the Denver Classroom Teachers Association, which backed opponents of Peña and Hoyt, said she believes the teachers' union and board can still work together.

"I would hope it wouldn't hurt the relationship," she said. "We're focused on bringing parents and teachers together to help kids be successful, and I know the district is interested in that as well."

Tuesday, November 6,

2007

DPS board's Hoyt and Pena keep seats

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YourHub.com

Wednesday, November
7, 2007

Hoyt declared DPS Dist. 1

winner, others pending

City and County of Denver voters are filling three positions on the Denver Public School Board, and answering ballot questions regarding raising the mill levy and issuing bonds for maintenance and new construction.

We will post updates from the Election Division at city hall as they become available and speak with the school board candidates in District 1, District 5 and At-Large races as results become available and winners are indicated.

Watch for more in-depth results and reactions online at **YourHub.com**. Because the election results are not known until after our deadlines today, those results will not be featured in the YourHub.com Thursday print editions.

The *Rocky Mountain News* reported that voter turnout was estimated by election officials at about 33 percent of 209,607 registered voters.

In the Denver School Board races, incumbent and current board vice president **Bruce Hoyt** was declared the early winner by the Rocky Mountain News in District 1, out distancing **Laurence Botnick** and **Frank Deserino**.

Reacting to his win, Hoyt told YourHub.com, "I'm very excited about the victory and very appreciative of the voters expressing confidence in me and in the reforms we started in the Denver Public Schools."

He defined his most important priority, among the many, for

DPS: "It's the continuing to implement the Denver (reform) plan and to work on the budget of DPS to allocate additional resources to the classroom and with better funding, promoting additional early childhood education opportunities. Also greater accountability at all levels of the district with measurable goals and mechanism to help us achieve our goals."

In late counting, At-Large balloting found a favorable lead for current board president **Theresa Pena** over **John McBride** and former board member **Rita Montero**. In District 5, a very tight race developed between **Arturo Jimenez** and **Tony Curcio**, with **Raymond Gutierrez** a distant third.

The vote on Denver ballot bond measures was trending toward a possible sweep. Five of the nine issues were declared won early, with others also trending toward approval while votes on issues G and H had the narrowest margins of approval.

The Rocky Mountain News called questions B,C,D, E and I won early in the evening. The Rocky also reported the City Election Division Web site was slow in posting updates in the ballot counting. At one point the page did not exist and about 10:15, was replaced by a message saying there were technical difficulties and promising results "momentarily." "Results from the nine referred bond questions on the ballot, the so-called Better Denver initiative also found early winners declared by the *Rocky* in issues, including 1B, the human service bonds; 1C, the library bonds; 1D, the road bonds; 1E the park bonds; and 1I, the public safety bonds.

Center for American Progress

**Tuesday, November 6,
2007**

Teacher Pay Reforms Must Focus Incentives on Improving Student Learning

November 6, 2007

States and school districts around the country are implementing alternative teacher compensation programs, often to mixed reactions. Many of the programs include a performance pay component based on student achievement test results, making them controversial with some teachers unions, school administrators, and communities. But in places like Denver and Minnesota, where the programs have been carefully crafted to fit local needs, performance pay just may be the right plan

at the right time to benefit student learning.

“We’re in an era in education where results matter,” Brad Jupp, Senior Academic Policy Advisor to the Denver Public Schools’ ProComp program, told an audience at the Center for American Progress on Monday. Jupp was responding to two new reports from CAP about reforming teacher compensation in public schools.

Jupp was joined on the panel by Joan Baratz-Snowden, the author of one of the papers and the president of the Education Study Center; Robin Chait, report author and Senior Education Policy Analyst at the Center for American Progress; and Stacey Hunt, Teacher Advancement Program Manager in the Chicago Public Schools. Cindy Brown, Director of Education Policy at CAP, moderated.

The authors, Jupp said, are demanding a new discourse about the way teachers should be paid.

All panelists agreed that this new discourse should be based on student results. Baratz-Snowden, a former official at the American Federation of Teachers, spoke on the need to shift the focus of the teacher pay discussion away from its current emphasis on teacher inputs and toward accountability and student output. But a focus on outcomes should not stymie the conversation about performance pay or teacher improvement.

Denver’s ProComp program, one of the most

successful alternative compensation programs in recent years, uses a methodology based on students' learning gains on tests to determine only a part of teacher pay increases. The other bonuses that teachers can receive are based on knowledge and skills acquired through extra training, professional evaluation by peers and principals, and teaching in high needs schools or subject areas.

Officials in both Denver and Minnesota developed their programs in consultation with local teachers unions and have seen satisfaction from both teachers and parents. On the other hand, Florida's performance pay program was implemented hastily, imposed punitive quotas, and didn't involve teachers in its development. That program, implemented in 2006, has already undergone several modifications.

Jupp emphasized the collaborative element of the Denver program, saying that schools, teachers, and administrators need a shared will to solve tough problems and go forward together to ensure success for students. Indeed, the collaborative aspect of alternative compensation programs can be an essential factor in whether the program itself thrives in schools.

After analyzing performance pay programs in eight states, Robin Chait found that many of these programs contained the elements that we would expect in effective programs. Emphasis on schoolwide improvement—not just in individual classrooms—was a factor in all of the programs, as

were principal or peer evaluations of teachers.

Inclusive programs that help all teachers help all students, performance pay systems with a clear purpose of improving student learning, and inclusion of teachers in design and implementation are all components of successful systems. The programs must be designed to “increase the overall quality of the workforce,” said Snowden, and they must garner broad public support. Alternative compensation, she said, is a process, not an event, and it works best when states and districts take the time and the money to get it right.